(b) whether it is a fact that terrorists and smugglers are using this route very often to carry out anti-Indian activities;

(c) what steps Government are taking to check unauthorised persons, including Nepalese from entering India; and

(d) whether Government getting co-operation from Nepal Government to check these incidents and whether Government propose to discuss this issue with Nepal Government?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA): (a) At the third meeting of the India-Nepal Joint Working Group on Border Management held in Kathmandu from February 1—3, 2000, the two sides discussed the possibility of introducing a passport system, without the requirement of visa, for the purpose of identification of nationality of Indian and Nepalese citizens travelling by air between the two countries. Till such time that the modalities for the operationalisation of this system are firmed up, it was agreed to scrutinise and reduce the type of photo-identification documents that would be valid for air travel and notify each other of the revised list of such documents.

(b) to (d) The India-Nepal border has historically been an open border with a visa-free travel regime. In view of the recent instances of misuse of this open border for staging anti-India activities, the concerned agencies of His Majesty's Government of Nepal and the Government of India remain in regular touch, both directly and through bilateral institutional mechanism, such as the Joint Working Group on Border Management and Home Secretary level talks. Concrete measures and cooperation on security issues are discussed, reviewed and followed up at these meetings. SeveraLmeasures have been taken to enhance cooperation with Nepal, particularly with regard to implementing effective border management. Efforts have been made by both sides to jointly coordinate measures, including stepping up vigil along the contiguous border districts of India and Nepal, to prevent misuse of the open India-Nepal border for activities directed against India. On their part, His Majesty's Government of Nepal have assured that their territory would not be used for activities inimical to India's interest and have been extending their cooperation to the Government of India in this regard.

INDO-US joint working group to combat terrorism

†1559. SHRI SWARAJ KAUSHAL: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(a) whether India and the United States of America have agreed to constitute a joint working group to combat terrorism;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether any agreement has been signed by both countries in this regard;

(d) if so, the terms and conditions and details of the agreement; and

(e) the date from which the said agreement will be effective?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. India and the United States have established a Joint Working Group on Counter-terrorism to institutionalise and intensify their co-operation to combat international terrorism.

(c) and (d) The two sides have agreed on a range of measures to enhance co-operation to combat international terrorism, and as part of this process, the two sides would share experience, exchange information, and co-ordinate approaches and action. The U.S. has offered training facilities for anti-terrorist activities, the specifics to be determined in future visits. The two sides also decided to convene a meeting of each side's legal experts in April to discuss the Indian proposed UN Terrorism Convention. Further, the two sides have agreed to intensify their joint cooperation to ensure that the perpetrators of the hijacking of Indian Airlines Flight 814 are brought to justice, as part of their joint efforts to combat international terrorism.

(e) The dicision to constitute the Indo-US Joint Working Group on Counter-terrorism was announced at the conclusion of the latest discussions of the ongoing Indo-US dialogue on security, non-proliferation, disarmament and related issues, held on January 18-19, 2000 in London. The first meeting of the Indo-US Joint Working Group on Counter-terrorism took place in Washington D.C. on February 7-8, 2000.

Categories of people to be given passports within seven days

1560. SHRI RAMACHANDRAIAH RUMANDLA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the categories of the people to be given passports within seven days;

(b) the salient features of the new Tatkaal Scheme; and

(c) its impact on applicants of general category?